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SUBJECT: MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE: FOCUS ON RUSSIA

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11. (U) SUMMARY. Participants wondered until the last moment which Russian Federation official would speak for Russia (there was speculation that Prime Minister Putin would appear) and what he would bring to the podium at this year's Munich Security Conference (MSC), February 6-8. It was Russian Head of Delegation First Deputy Prime Minister Ivanov who offered a relatively constructive tone to the proceedings. Although outweighed by the debate surrounding Afghanistan and Pakistan, discussion of Russian issues ranged from missile defense (MD) to the gas dispute to the future of security structures in Europe. During his speech, Ivanov repeated Russia's opposition to U.S. "unilateral" solutions on MD. On the recent gas crisis, senior EU politicians refused to accept the Russian line that it was "just a gas dispute." When the discussion turned to the future of European security, French President Sarkozy recommended that Ukraine and Georgia follow European standards and rules if they wanted to join NATO and the EU. Many speakers expressed cautious readiness to explore Russian President Medvedev's proposal for a new European security architecture, but warned that the proposal was "too vague," and that an attempt to undermine NATO and the transatlantic relationship would fail. (Other MSC issues reported REFTELS AND SEPTELS.) END SUMMARY.

THE ISKANDER CARD

12. (U) European participants considered how to include Russia in MD and expressed their relief that the Russians would not deploy Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad. Specifically, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier expressed satisfaction with Russia's decision but also the hope that the United States and Russia find common ground on missile defense: "If this is about a common threat, then common answers must be possible." Ivanov explained that Medvedev's announcement not to deploy Iskander is perfectly in line with Medvedev's November announcement, which he summarized as "no MD, no Iskander." Czech Deputy Prime Minister Vondra rejected the idea that Russia should have such a veto power over MD, but he agreed that Russia should be invited to cooperate in the program. Henry Kissinger eloquently called for the U.S. and Russia to cooperate against threats from proliferating countries. Specifically, he called the Russian proposal for a joint missile defense toward the Middle East to be a "creative political and strategic answer to a common problem."

13. (U) Ivanov took the stage to reaffirm Russia's opposition to a "unilateral" U.S. missile shield in Europe. Moreover, he argued that the deployment of MD directly affects regional and international security. In a veiled threat, Ivanov said that tensions would

increase if the U.S. fielded a "unilateral" missile defense in a European site "without due respect to the interests of strategic stability of other parties involved."

THE LINGERING EFFECTS OF THE GAS CRISIS

¶4. (U) Polish Prime Minister Tusk and EU High Representative Solana concluded that the gas dispute was not only about business and had broader implications. Tusk added that the crisis was a purposeful Russian test of European solidarity. Tusk said that solidarity during "real, hard conflicts" might be extremely limited because solidarity was so weak during the gas crisis.

¶5. (U) The discussion also focused on the economic ramifications of the crisis. Czech Deputy Prime Minister Vondra recommended that Europe must diversify its gas supplies by having as many pipelines as possible, including Northstream, Southstream, and Nabucco. Chancellor Merkel highlighted the EU plan to interlink the electricity and gas networks in Europe to make individual European member states less vulnerable to future gas crises. President Sarkozy recommended that Russia and the EU should be able to cooperate on the energy issue if Europe provides the technology and Russia delivers energy in return. He added that Russia cannot afford to upset its customers. Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko called for a unified EU energy policy and said Russia was to blame for the crisis while Ukraine was part of the solution. She emphasized multiple times that Ukraine is a reliable partner and that alternative routes such as Northstream and Nabucco are "wrong."

THE FUTURE OF SECURITY IN EUROPE

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¶6. (U) Some speakers expressed hesitation or confusion regarding Medvedev's proposal for a new European security architecture. President Sarkzoy suggested taking Medvedev by his word in order to find out what is actually behind the offer and whether these were just vague "Sunday speeches." Prime Minister Tusk said he was willing to learn more about the proposal, especially regarding conflict prevention. Chancellor Merkel was open to exploring Russia's proposal but cautioned that a treaty would be too cumbersome. EU High Representative Solana emphasized that the principles of Helsinki are not negotiable and they only can be added to and not replaced.

¶7. (U) On relations between NATO and Russia, Foreign Minister Steinmeier recommended that a "group of eminent persons" develop recommendations for the future of NATO. Merkel said that Russia must overcome its false perception that NATO is a cold war institution. Sarkozy said that he does not fear a Russian military threat to NATO because of Russia is forced to concentrate on its own domestic troubles and conflicts.

NELSON